

**To:** NICC[NICC@HQ.DHS.GOV]  
**From:** Eoc, Epahq  
**Sent:** Thur 8/20/2015 10:14:05 PM  
**Subject:** FW: EOC Spot Report Update #14: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

FYI

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**From:** Eoc, Epahq  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 20, 2015 6:12 PM  
**To:** Eoc, Epahq  
**Cc:** OSWER OEM EOC Positions  
**Subject:** EOC Spot Report Update #14: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

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# **EOC Spot Report Update #14: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**Report as of 1900 EDT on 08/20/2015**

## **Overview:**

On 8/5, an EPA and Colorado State Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety team was working to investigate and address contamination at the abandoned Gold King Mine in San Juan County, CO. A large release of mine wastewater into Cement Creek occurred while an EPA site assessment team was conducting site investigation activities. Initial estimates indicated that the release was approximately one million gallons that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. The estimate has since been revised to 3 million gallons. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach and all were unharmed. The release's path flowed through three of EPA's regions: Region 8—Colorado, Utah and the Southern Ute Tribe; Region 6--New Mexico; and, Region 9--Navajo Nation.

## **State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions:**

The Region 8 Unified incident Command includes EPA, State of Colorado Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT), and La Plata County. US Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR) is conducting road stabilization in and around the mine site.

EPA Region 8 is coordinating with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in response to public health concerns associated with the mine waste plume. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) measured increased river flows and provisionally calculated flow volume of approximately 3 million gallons discharged from the Gold King Mine.

## **EPA Actions:**

*Response Organization:* EPA is integrated in Unified EPA Area Command (UEAC) in Durango, CO and in three Incident Command Posts (ICPs) in Silverton and Durango, CO and Farmington, NM. The Farmington, NM ICP is composed of two branches: one in Farmington, NM and another in Lake Powell at the Arizona and Utah Border. Operations at the Lake Powell ICP are completed and personnel will begin demobilizing today. Unified EPA Area Command in Durango, CO includes representatives from EPA Regions 6, 8 and 9. The Region 10 REOC activated on 8/14, to support the Gold King and Typhoon responses. The Headquarters Emergency Operations Center (HQ EOC) activated to Level 1 Operations on Tuesday, August 11.

Some Region 9 field operations associated with Navajo Nation have temporarily been suspended.

*Public Information:* A public-facing website has been set up for the response: <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine>. EPA is reviewing sampling data and developing public messaging to include the development of a wider message that river conditions are returning to normal.

Region 8 maintains a general incident hotline phone number for Region 8. As of 8/19, the call center has received 763 calls.

Social Media Sites being maintained by the UC JIC through local and state resources are:

Blog – [goldkingminerelease.blogspot.com](http://goldkingminerelease.blogspot.com)

FB – [facebook.com/goldkingminerelease](https://facebook.com/goldkingminerelease)

Twitter - @GKMRelease, @SilvertonCO1, @VisitSilverton

YouTube Channel – Gold King Mine Release

As of midday on 8/20, the blog has received 1239 page views (243 on 8/19/2015), 0 comments; Facebook has 38 likes, 14 shares, 0 comments, and total reach of 216; and there 26 tweets and 24 followers.

EPA issued a press release on 8/19 stating that water quality in the San Juan River has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation.

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/6CA2EE5CC335927585257EA7001294F4>

On 8/19, Utah DEQ posted both graphs of its data and explanations of this data DEQ scientists believe that the highest levels of contaminants associated with the initial spill event have passed through the San Juan River in Utah. To view detailed information see the link:

<http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/index.htm>

New Mexico announced that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume. The City of Durango announced that they had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution; and La Plata County announced that the Animas River was open to recreational use. **The State of Utah also lifted their advisories for Utah Crop Irrigation and Livestock.**

UEAC will host a public meeting and Open House in Durango, CO on 8/20. UEAC is hosting visits from two staff members from Senator John Barrasso's office on 8/20 and co-hosting an informational meeting on 8/21 with the Senator Barrasso's office and other Federal and local agencies. UEAC is also hosting visits from state officials from Colorado and Utah, EPA Region 8 officials, and Navajo Nation officials.

*Sampling and Data Review:* The following data has been posted on the [www.epa.gov/goldkingmine](http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine) web site: drinking water intake surface water data from 8/6-12, drinking water intake sediment data from 8/10-13, and irrigation ditch sediment data from 8/13.

*Drinking Water Sampling:* The City of Durango, in coordination with CDPHE, has resumed pumping water from the Animas River for their water treatment plant. Out of 253 groundwater wells sampled, only seven (7) wells exceeded Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for lead and arsenic. However, these samples were taken from the well head prior to going through the home treatment systems. EPA Region 8 will be conducting well water sampling as needed and

calling those residents sampled to provide them analytical results. If well samples exceed drinking water standards in the wells, those wells will be flushed and then resampled at both the tap and at the well.

In Region 6 (New Mexico Command, Farmington), ten (10) teams of EPA, NMED and EPA contractors sampled 38 private water wells on August 19. The sampling effort will continue on August 20. EPA is drafting a letter to notify the private well owners about their test results from EPA's private well sampling when those results are available for reporting.

Surface Water & Sediment Sampling: EPA will return to sampling seven (7) surface water locations as of 8/19. EPA Region 8 continues to operate four treatment and sedimentation ponds at the mine site which are treating water by lowering acidity levels and removing dissolved metals. Treated water from the last treatment pond is discharging into Cement Creek. Water quality data is being collected at the influent and effluent of the treatment system.

In Region 6 (New Mexico Command, Farmington), EPA continues to collect water quality samples from nine (9) locations in the river near intakes for Aztec, Farmington, Lower Valley Water Users Association, Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water User Association.

CDPHE joined EPA to assess the upper Animas River through the canyon. An area of slow water and significant sediment deposits was identified approximately five miles below Silverton. The area is commonly known as Elk Park.

Sampling along the San Juan River is on hold until further notice.

Irrigation Ditch Sampling: Irrigation ditches drawing from the Animas River in Colorado are now open and available for use. Ditch and property assessments will continue with focus on whether any mitigation of private properties needs to be completed. There are currently 4-8 properties under construction for targeted limited sediment removal.

*Water Delivery and Supply:* The Morningstar Water System is receiving water in its storage tank from the Farmington connection. The pump system covers 3 ½ miles and is filling the city's 3 million gallon tank.

EPA is coordinating with NMED and the water system about taking special samples or resuming their normal compliance sampling for coliforms in the distribution system to check on the quality of the treated water.

Water tank and feed delivery to Navajo Nation is on hold until further notice.

*Claims:* EPA has a claims process for compensating citizens who suffer personal injury or property damage caused by U.S. government actions. The process includes guidance on documentation that may be required to support claims for loss of employment and loss of income, among other claims. Region 8 has had inquiries about such claims from business owners in CO. A FAQ on the claims process was posted to <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine> on 8/18.

See previous reports for past EPA regional and HQ actions.

**Media Interest:** High

[http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_28669132/colorado-utah-attorneys-general-feds-are-withholding-gold](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_28669132/colorado-utah-attorneys-general-feds-are-withholding-gold)

<http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-08-20/make-the-gold-king-mine-spill-a-turning-point-for-the-epa>

<http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/interior-department-to-lead-investigation-of-gold-king-mine-waste-spill-into-animas-river>

**The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provided updates as needed.**

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